

## Social Security Administration

## §404.1615

### RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PERFORMING THE DISABILITY DETERMINATION FUNCTION

#### **§ 404.1610 How a State notifies us that it wishes to perform the disability determination function.**

(a) *Deemed notice.* Any State that has in effect as of June 1, 1981, an agreement with us to make disability determinations will be deemed to have given us notice that it wishes to perform the disability determination function, in lieu of continuing the agreement in effect after June 1, 1981.

(b) *Written notice.* After June 1, 1981, a State not making disability determinations that wishes to perform the disability determination function under these regulations must notify us in writing. The notice must be from an official authorized to act for the State for this purpose. The State will provide an opinion from the State's Attorney General verifying the authority of the official who sent the notice to act for the State.

#### **§ 404.1611 How we notify a State whether it may perform the disability determination function.**

(a) If a State notifies us in writing that it wishes to perform the disability determination function, we will notify the State in writing whether or not it may perform the function. The State will begin performing the disability determination function beginning with the month we and the State agree upon.

(b) If we have previously found that a State agency has substantially failed to make disability determinations in accordance with the law or these regulations and other written guidelines or if the State has previously notified us in writing that it does not wish to make disability determinations, the notice will advise the State whether the State agency may again make the disability determinations and, if so, the date and the conditions under which the State may again make them.

#### **§ 404.1613 Disability determinations the State makes.**

(a) *General rule.* A State agency will make determinations of disability with respect to all persons in the State except those individuals whose cases are

in a class specifically excluded by our written guidelines. A determination of disability made by the State is the determination of the Commissioner, except as described in § 404.1503(d)(1).

(b) *New classes of cases.* Where any new class or classes of cases arise requiring determinations of disability, we will determine the conditions under which a State may choose not to make the disability determinations. We will provide the State with the necessary funding to do the additional work.

(c) *Temporary transfer of classes of cases.* We will make disability determinations for classes of cases temporarily transferred to us by the State agency if the State agency asks us to do so and we agree. The State agency will make written arrangements with us which will specify the period of time and the class or classes of cases we will do.

[46 FR 29204, May 29, 1981, as amended at 62 FR 38452, July 18, 1997]

#### **§ 404.1614 Responsibilities for obtaining evidence to make disability determinations.**

(a) The State agency will secure from the claimant, or other sources, any evidence it needs to make a disability determination.

(b) We will secure from the claimant or other special arrangement sources, any evidence we can obtain as adequately and more readily than the State agency. We will furnish the evidence to the State agency for use in making a disability determination.

(c) At our request, the State agency will obtain and furnish medical or other evidence and provide assistance as may be necessary for us to carry out our responsibilities—

(1) For making disability determinations in those classes of cases described in the written guidelines for which the State agency does not make the determination; or

(2) Under international agreements with respect to social security benefits payable under section 233 of the Act.

#### **§ 404.1615 Making disability determinations.**

(a) When making a disability determination, the State agency will apply subpart P, part 404, of our regulations.

#### § 404.1616

#### 20 CFR Ch. III (4–1–10 Edition)

(b) The State agency will make disability determinations based only on the medical and nonmedical evidence in its files.

(c) Disability determinations will be made by either:

(1) A State agency medical or psychological consultant and a State agency disability examiner;

(2) A State agency disability examiner alone when there is no medical evidence to be evaluated (*i.e.*, no medical evidence exists or we are unable, despite making every reasonable effort, to obtain any medical evidence that may exist) and the individual fails or refuses, without a good reason, to attend a consultative examination (see § 404.1518); or

(3) A State agency disability hearing officer.

See § 404.1616 for the definition of medical or psychological consultant and § 404.915 for the definition of disability hearing officer. The State agency disability examiner and disability hearing officer must be qualified to interpret and evaluate medical reports and other evidence relating to the claimant's physical or mental impairments and as necessary to determine the capacities of the claimant to perform substantial gainful activity.

See § 404.1572 for what we mean by substantial gainful activity.

(d) An initial determination by the State agency that an individual is not disabled, in any case where there is evidence which indicates the existence of a mental impairment, will be made only after every reasonable effort has been made to ensure that a qualified psychiatrist or psychologist has completed the medical portion of the case review and any applicable residual functional capacity assessment. (See § 404.1616 for the qualifications we consider necessary for a psychologist to be a psychological consultant and § 404.1617 for what we mean by "reasonable effort".) If the services of qualified psychiatrists or psychologists cannot be obtained because of impediments at the State level, the Commissioner may contract directly for the services. In a case where there is evidence of mental and nonmental impairments and a qualified psychologist serves as a psychological consultant, the psychologist

will evaluate only the mental impairment, and a physician will evaluate the nonmental impairment.

(e) The State agency will certify each determination of disability to us on forms we provide.

(f) The State agency will furnish us with all the evidence it considered in making its determination.

(g) The State agency will not be responsible for defending in court any determination made, or any procedure for making determinations, under these regulations.

[52 FR 33926, Sept. 9, 1987, as amended at 56 FR 11018, Mar. 14, 1991; 61 FR 11135, Mar. 19, 1996; 62 FR 38452, July 18, 1997; 65 FR 34958, June 1, 2000]

#### § 404.1616 Medical or psychological consultants.

(a) *What is a medical consultant?* A medical consultant is a person who is a member of a team that makes disability determinations in a State agency, as explained in § 404.1615, or who is a member of a team that makes disability determinations for us when we make disability determinations ourselves.

(b) *What qualifications must a medical consultant have?* A medical consultant must be an acceptable medical source identified in § 404.1513(a)(1) or (a)(3) through (a)(5); that is, a licensed physician (medical or osteopathic), a licensed optometrist, a licensed podiatrist, or a qualified speech-language pathologist. The medical consultant must meet any appropriate qualifications for his or her specialty as explained in § 404.1513(a). In claims adjudicated under the procedures in part 405 of this chapter, medical experts employed by or under contract with the State agencies must meet the qualification standards prescribed by the Commissioner.

(c) *Are there any limitations on what medical consultants who are not physicians can evaluate?* Medical consultants who are not physicians are limited to evaluating the impairments for which they are qualified, as described in § 404.1513(a). Medical consultants who are not physicians also are limited as to when they may serve as a member of